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THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

JCSM-872-62

NOV 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Subject: Recommended US Reaction to Hostile Attack of US
Reconnaissance Aircraft over Cuba

1. In the meeting of the Executive Committee, National Security Council, on 6 November 1962, the President asked for comment as to what action should be taken in the event that a US reconnaissance aircraft were either fired upon or shot down over Cuba. The Joint Chiefs of Staff have discussed the question in detail and would recommend the following sequence of actions:

a. First, we should establish to our own satisfaction whether or not the hostile act represents an isolated incident or is a clear indication of deliberate intent to resist US air surveillance over Cuba.

b. Concurrently, we should protest the incident to the USSR representatives at the UN and endeavor to determine the Soviet attitude.

c. If we adjudged the incident to be an isolated one, we would take appropriate limited retaliatory action, preferably against the specific weapons, weapons site, or airfield, which could be held responsible for the attack upon our aircraft.

d. On the other hand, if we adjudged the incident to be evidence of a deliberate intention on the part of the Cuban authorities to resist surveillance, the US reaction would be full attack on all airfields and air defense weapons systems in Cuba. At this point, consideration should also be given to including IL-28's in the attack, if they are still in Cuba, and to the institution of a complete blockade of Cuba.

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2. The Joint Chiefs of Staff are impressed with the variety of situations which may arise in this field and the difficulty to prejudge the proper reaction in advance of the event. There is no question in our minds, however, that if the Cuban authorities demonstrate an intention to resist our overflights we must react promptly against the entire air defense system.

For the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

Maxwell D. Taylor

MAXWELL D. TAYLOR

Chairman

Joint Chief of Staff

TOP SECRET

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